

126(34)

ECCENTRIC FORMS OF HEBREW VERSE

BY

PROFESSOR ISRAEL DAVIDSON



Reprinted by courtesy of the General Publication
Committee of the Students' Annual of the
Jewish Theological Seminary of America
New York, 1914

ornia
al

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

ECCENTRIC FORMS OF HEBREW VERSE

BY PROFESSOR ISRAEL DAVIDSON

THE influence of Arabic on Hebrew poetry made itself felt first and foremost in the art of versification. But it is not the meter alone that has been revolutionized by Arabic poetry: the exterior aspect of Hebrew verse has equally been affected by it. The Arabs set the fashion for poets to indulge in strange devices, which gave their poems an interest apart from their content and rhythmic beauty.¹ Due partly to this influence, and partly, also, to a native sense of playfulness, mediæval Hebrew poets have developed a certain species of verse which may be called whimsical. Such compositions lay special stress upon some odd device, calculated to catch the eye, or to surprise the ear, or, otherwise, to startle us by its strange peculiarity. The difficulties in which this species of writing abounds challenged the ingenuity of the best minds and gave them an outlet for their pent-up youthfulness. To cite but one instance out of many, there is Abraham ibn Ezra, in the midst of his weary wandering, penning picturesque epistles or writing riddles to his friends. In fact, this peculiar class of compositions is not only interesting to the student of Hebrew poetry, but is just as interesting to the student of Jewish pastimes and amusements, and in a measure it may also serve as an index of Jewish optimism.

All whimsical compositions may be said to fall into three main divisions, those which appeal to the eye, those which appeal to the ear, and those which strike us as peculiar, not by their form or their sound, but by the fact that they make use of some ingenious combination of letters, words, or phrases. The odd devices by which the various whimsicalities are produced are quite numerous, and the following is an attempt to elucidate and illustrate each of them:

¹ See Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*, Leipzig, 1836, p. 164.

been imitated only by Wolf Buchner¹² and M. Hesse.¹³ In regard Zedek in the nineteenth.¹¹ The second lipogram of Bedarshi has been imitated only by Wolf Buchner¹² and M. Hesse.¹³ In regard to Buchner, it may be stated in this connection that almost all his poetic effusions are whimsical, and that most of his whimseys are lipograms of one form or other. His *Shire Tehillah*, for instance, which is the most pretentious of his poetic compositions, is, with the exception of the first six leaves, made up of various lipograms employing different letters of the alphabet for the different poems.¹⁴

While most of the lipograms make use of the letter א"ל, the letter ה"א was also not neglected. David ben Solomon Vidal, in the sixteenth century (d. after 1536), composed a poem of a thousand words, each beginning with ה"א,¹⁵ and the same was done by M. S. Rabener in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ In the 18th century Aaron Hayyim Voltera composed a religious poem each

אק. הגון vol. iii, p. 164.

אקרישך Leghorn, 1780, fol. 43-47, beginning אקרישך

אקרישך אב אחר אל ארץ אפים

אלף אלפין אגרת אבל אזכרה אל איש אשכולות... אדלר אב"ר ארצות אנג

1890. He left out the name Nathan because it begins with נון

אל"ף f שיר, Frankfurt, 1802; שירי תהלה, Berlin, 1808; שיר יידיה, Frankfurt,

Hamburg, 1829. According to Fürst, *Bibliotheca* vol. i, p. 390. Hesse is only the editor, not the author.

7a-8a each word contains the letter א; שיר יידיה, comp. note 12 above; fol. 29b-40a, consists

than 850 words, each containing a ל, but no letter that follows

alphabet; fol. 40-43 שירי תהלה לראש חדש similar to the preceding;

שירי תהלה ליום ב' של ר"ח omits all letters between א and ל; fol. 46b-50k

שירי תהלה לר"ח אייר contains a נון in each word; fol. 50b-52a שירי תהלה

letter א in each word. The same method is carried on for the

months, the poem for סיון has the letter ס in each word and so on.

מכתם לרור הה (in his הגדול הגבור הנורא המצוי beginning בקשת הה

546, fol. 100a). It is preceded by two couplets as follows:

במקום קרבן עולה מנחה ונכד ורביעית ההין

אשף שיהה בתחינתו העולה היא אלף ההין

אבינו מלכנו אתה יוצר אנחנו ההומר

אתה האב הסבת ושטע קול שועת בן הא הא אומר

הא דרך בראש נתתי שירי (Ezek. xvi, 43) in

אז, vol. i, pp. 47-52.

1-2. *Acrostics and Lipograms*

The most ancient of the poetic whimses is the acrostic, and since the Bible itself contains some poems with acrostics, this device must be considered as genuinely Jewish, or at least not the result of Arabic influence. It is also of all groups the most frequently met with in Hebrew literature, and therefore stands in no need of illustration.² But akin to the acrostic is the lipogram, which is a poem so constructed as to omit entirely one or more letters of the alphabet, or, on the contrary, restricted to the use of a certain letter in each word. The earliest examples of the lipogram are, perhaps, the two poems contained in the eleventh chapter of Harizi's *Tahkemoni*, one of which is restricted to the use of the letter ר"ש in each word, and the other to the entire omission of the same letter.³ More remarkable, however, are the two lipograms of Abraham Bedarshi, one of which consists of a thousand words, each beginning with the letter א"ל,⁴ and the other of four hundred and twelve words, each of which is restricted to the use of the letters between א"ל and ל"מ and the omission of any letter that follows ל"מ in the alphabet.⁵ His son Shimon daiah, likewise cultivated this species of composition, and wrote a long prayer, each word of which begins with the letter מ"ם.⁶ Difficult as this mode of composition is, there are nevertheless a number of poets who cultivated it with more success. Of those who imitated Abraham Bedarshi's first lipogram mention should be made of Joseph ben Sheshet ibn Latimi, fourteenth century,⁷ Israel Nagara in the sixteenth century,

² On the various forms of the acrostic comp. Zunz. *Synagoga* Berlin, 1855, p. 105, etc.; MGWJ., vol. 47, p. 171. For an excellent case of acrostic see *Divan of Judah Halevi*, ed. Brody, vol. 2, p. 105.

³ Comp. *תחכמוני* ed. Kaminka, Warsaw, 1899, p. 114, beginning *אצילנו גאון עדיינו* and p. 116, beginning *אצילנו גאון עדיינו*.

⁴ *כרם חמד* vol. iv, pp. 59-65), comp. also *כרם חמד* vol. ii, No. 5.

⁵ *בקשת הלמדן* (in numerous editions; see Benjaïacob *אורח* s. v.).

⁶ *בקשת הממון* (See *ibid.* s. v.).

⁷ *מיר את אדוני תפלה למשורר ר' יוסף ברבי ששט בן לטימ* (beginning *אדוני תפלה למשורר ר' יוסף ברבי ששט בן לטימ*, קובץ, Breslau, 1844). Comp. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 98. Landshuth *העבודה* p. 98.

⁸ *אהיה אשר אהיה*. Venice, 1599, No. 54, beginning *אהיה אשר אהיה*.

been imitated only by Wolf Buchner¹² and M. Hesse.¹³ In regard Zedek in the nineteenth.¹¹ The second lipogram of Bedarshi has been imitated only by Wolf Buchner¹² and M. Hesse.¹³ In regard to Buchner, it may be stated in this connection that almost all his poetic effusions are whimsical, and that most of his whimsies are lipograms of one form or other. His *Shire Tehillah*, for instance, which is the most pretentious of his poetic compositions, is, with the exception of the first six leaves, made up of various lipograms employing different letters of the alphabet for the different poems.¹⁴

While most of the lipograms make use of the letter א"ל, the letter ה"א was also not neglected. David ben Solomon Vidal, in the sixteenth century (d. after 1536), composed a poem of a thousand words, each beginning with ה"א,¹⁵ and the same was done by M. S. Rabener in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ In the 18th century, Aaron Hayyim Voltera composed a religious poem each

¹² Comp. הגרן vol. iii, p. 164.

¹³ Comp. אגרות הרמ"ו Leghorn, 1780, fol. 43-47, beginning אקרישך אקריצך אב אחר אל ארך אפם

¹⁴ אלף אלפין אגרת אבל אזכרה אל איש אשכלות ... אדור אב"ר ארצות אנגליא London, 1890. He left out the name Nathan because it begins with נון" instead of א"ל.

¹⁵ שיר ידירות, Berlin, 1808; שירי תהלה, שיר נפלא¹⁶ Frankfurt, 1802; שיר נפלא, 1810.

¹⁶ Comp. חקעת הלמדין חרשה Hamburg, 1829. According to Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica*, vol. i, p. 390. Hesse is only the editor, not the author.

¹⁷ Fol. 7a-8a א"ל each word contains the letter א; fol. 12-29 ה"א comp. note 12 above; fol. 29b-40a, שיר ידירות, consists of more than 850 words, each containing a ה, but no letter that follows ה in the alphabet; fol. 40-43 שירי תהלה לראש חדש similar to the preceding; fol. 44-46a ב' של ר"ח omits all letters between א and ה; fol. 46b-50k שירי תהלה לר"ח אייר contains a ב in each word; fol. 50b-52a שירי תהלה לר"ח contains a ג in each word. The same method is carried on for the other months, the poem for סיון has the letter ס in each word and so on.

¹⁸ Comp. חקעת החה"ן beginning האל הגדול הגבור הגורא המצוי (in his ידירות) Venice, 1546, fol. 100a). It is preceded by two couplets as follows:

במקום קרבן עולה מנחה	ונסך ורביעית ההין
אשף שיהיה בתחינתו	העולה היא אלף ההין
אבינו מלכנו אתה	יוצר אנהנו החומר
אתה האב הסבת ושמע	קול שועת בן יא יא אומר

¹⁹ Ezek. xvi, (43) in הא דרכך בראש נתתי שיר האלף with the motto אומר, vol. i, pp. 47-52.

word of which begins with the letter ש״ן.¹⁷ As might be expected, the artificiality of these compositions was no aid to clearness, and in several instances commentaries became indispensable.¹⁸

3. Pictorial Whimseys

Belonging to the same class of whimsicalities, though not so ancient nor yet so common as the acrostic, are the pictorial whimses. It is generally accepted that Hebrew poets first learned from the Arabs to give their poems the shape of geometrical figures or figures taken from the vegetable and animal kingdoms.¹⁹ But the desire to embellish the exterior of poetic compositions can be traced to much earlier times, for the Talmud has already prescribed various forms in which certain poetic passages of the Bible are to be written in the scrolls. Some are to appear like small bricks above larger bricks, and larger bricks above smaller ones, and some are to appear like small bricks laid upon small bricks, and large bricks upon large bricks.²⁰ However, as these whimsicalities became more prevalent and more varied in the Middle Ages, it is but reasonable to assume that Arabic influence had something to do with it. Usually such eccentric compositions require more scribal skill than poetic inspiration. But there are some pictorial poems in which the construction and the form are so mutually dependent upon each other, that they require more than the mere ingenuity of a scribe. Such, for instance, is the *Tree Poem*, which Abraham ibn Ezra wrote in honor of Rabbi Jacob Tam.²¹

4. Echo Verses

From poetic whimses which appeal to the eye we come to consider those which appeal to the ear. Of course, the oldest is

¹⁷ בקשה חרישה, Leghorn, 1740.

¹⁸ Comp. e. g., ברם חמד, vol. iv, p. 59, and the poem of Volterra mentioned above.

¹⁹ Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ Comp. מגילה, 16b; מסכת סופרים, chap. xii, 10.

²¹ אילן שעשה... ר' אברהם בן עזרא הספרדי לר' יעקב בן ר' מאיר מצרפת (in Rosin, *Reime und Gedichte*, pp. 145-147). The Karaite Aaron b. Elijah, the younger, also composed a *tree poem* (Comp. כתר תורה, Gosslow, 1866, No. 20). (Communication of Dr. Marx.) Abraham Gabison composed a poem in the shape of a seven-branched candlestick (עומר השכחה) (p. 134b). Comp. also Steinschneider, ספרות ישראל, p. 222.

undoubtedly the echo verse, so-called because the last word of each verse consists of the ending of the preceding word, and sounds like its echo. The mere repetition of a rhyme in the middle of a verse, however, does not constitute it an echo verse. The poem of Moses ibn Ezra, for instance, beginning שבחי חי קשוב שוב²² does not belong to this class, nor are the poems the Shibzi beginning חל חל and בתום ידירה ידירה echo poems in the strict sense of the word.²³ It is necessary that the repetition of the rhyme should be at the end of the verse, just as the echo can only be heard when the original sound has stopped.

According to Kaufmann, who published a number of echo poems,²⁴ the echo verses are especially adapted for the elegy. Whether this opinion be accepted or not, the fact is that we have a number of elegies written in this eccentric form of verse, such as Joseph ben Solomon ibn Yahya's elegies on the death of Solomon ibn Adret,²⁵ and on the destruction of the temple,²⁶ Jomtob Valvasson's elegy on the death of Leon de Modena²⁷ and Isaac Aboab's (III) elegy on the destruction of the temple.²⁸ The echo verses, however, are by no means restricted to the elegy. Immanuel of Rome wrote a love poem in echo verse,²⁹ Israel Nagara composed a hymn in similar verses,³⁰ Jomtob Valvasson, mentioned above, wrote a poem of dedication,³¹ and one anonymous echo poem has

²² Comp. *Litbl. d. Or.*, 1847, p. 403, also *אוצר הספרות*, vol. v, p. 94.

²³ Bacher considered it so, comp. his *Hebräische und arabische Poesie der Juden Jemens*, p. 81, and the Hebrew part, p. 4, No. 23, and p. 11, No. 132.

²⁴ Comp. *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, pp. 22, 61, 114, 144.

²⁵ Comp. *ibid.*, p. 24, the echo verses begin with the fifth verse קרחה להרחיב כנשרים שרים חושו ותחת שיר אמרים מרים

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115, קרעו לבנות כבגדים גדים כי זר וערל מקדשים דשים.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146, the poem proper begins במר נשמע קול אומרים הו הו במר נשמע.

²⁸ Comp. *הגן*, vol. iii, p. 158, beginning: יושבי בכל תבל אמרים מרים.

²⁹ Comp. *מחברות*, ed. Lemberg, 1870, p. 23, beginning חלמה בלבה.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23, beginning ילאה נשוא לב על שביה שח אמרים מרים (in *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, 526; also in *הכרמל*, vol. ii, p. 308; also in *האסף*, vol. iv, p. 22; *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 144).

³¹ *הד אורים שיר גדול לחנוכת ביהמ"ד ת"ח בווניציא*, Venice, 1661. Comp. Steinschneider, *Die italienische Litteratur der Juden (Monatsschrift, 1899, p. 421)*, also the Russian Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 5, col. 292, where three stanzas are quoted.

even been admitted into the liturgy.³² Then, again, there are a number of didactic poems in echo verse by Meir ben Joseph ibn Yahya,³³ Moses Abudiente,³⁴ Moses Zacuto,³⁵ Joseph Penso,³⁶ Moses Hayyim Luzzatto,³⁷ Jacob Daniel Ulamo³⁸ and M. Freund.³⁹ The elasticity of the form, in spite of its difficulties, has been further demonstrated by Buxtorf in his prefatory remarks to his lexicon,⁴⁰ and even more so by R. Fürstenthal in his clever dialogue between a beggar and a miser, in which the miser is deceived by the echo of his own words to part with his fortune.⁴¹

5. *Macaronics*

Perhaps the most whimsical of all poetic whimsies is the macaronic, which may be composed in one of two ways. It may consist either of various languages welded together in one and the same verse, or of Hebrew words so selected that they may be phonetically interpreted as words of another language. Tradition ascribes to Samuel ha-Nagid the composition of a poem of seven stanzas, each in a different language.⁴² But the earliest existing example of the first kind of a macaronic is Harizi's poem in the eleventh chapter of the *Tahkemoni*, each line of which consists of three phrases, one in Hebrew, one in Arabic, and one in Aramaic, all fused into one

³² *pt. ii*, ספר שיר נאמן) מה אחרית להוט בתבל-הבל רודף שרירות לב ורצון-אסון fol. 21, Amsterdam, 1793; also in סדר הג השבועות ואזהרות ב כוריס... כולל סדר הג השבועות ואזהרות (Vienna, 1889, p. 3).

³³ *מה תלכו לקראת נחשים חשים*, published first as an epigraph to the ספר הכוזב, Fano, 1506; reprinted by Kaufmann in *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 116, and by Berliner in *Aus meiner Bibliothek*, Frankfurt, 1898, p. 33.

³⁴ נזולים במכמן הון סתרים חרים ימצו וישתו כוס שמרים מרים. See המאסף 1789, p. 162; *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 729; האסף vol. iv, p. 23.

³⁵ Comp. הפתח ערוך, stanzas 52-67.

³⁶ *אי זה שכן צדק עשירי נפש רשע* (in his התקפה, Leghorn, 1770, fol. 17a).

³⁷ Comp. מגיל עז, Leipzig, 1837, p. 77-78 (חלק ד' ענין ד').

³⁸ Comp. ערוך ערוך, § 14-34, 59-81, 147-149.

³⁹ *כוכבי יצחק* (in אחרית הסלים, vol. 31, p. 105).

⁴⁰ Comp. *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum*, Glasgow, 1824, p. 4. The poem begins as follows: *אלי סורי הבחורים קרבו כל הנערים ערים*. It is reprinted by Kaufmann in *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 145.

⁴¹ *ההד* in *Samoscz*, אגדת שושנים, Breslau, 1827, p. 74-75.

⁴² Comp. Steinschneider ספרות ישראל, p. 248.

homogeneous verse.⁴³ The fusing of Hebrew and its sister languages, Aramaic and Arabic,⁴⁴ may not appear so difficult or so strange as the fusing of Hebrew and European languages, yet even this feat has been accomplished. In a volume of liturgical compositions entitled *שבע שמחות* (Leghorn, 1782, folio 27a), there is a poem for the feast of Purim in which Hebrew and Spanish are fused together,⁴⁵ and in a similar collection entitled *שיר נאמן* (Amsterdam, 1793, fol. 21-22), we find two more poems in which Hebrew and French are the component parts.⁴⁶ Mordecai Astruc⁴⁷ composed three macaronic poems in which Hebrew and Provençal are used in alternate verses,⁴⁸ and Yomtob Valvasson wrote a sonnet, each verse of which consists of Hebrew, Portuguese and Italian.⁴⁹

The device of mixing languages, however, is not quite so difficult nor quite so startling as the use of Hebrew words which at

⁴³ *תחכמוני*, ed. Kaminka, pp. 112-114. See also *Montsschrift*, 1857, p. 220.

⁴⁴ Delitzsch erroneously ascribes a poem written in Hebrew Aramaic and Syriac to Raphael Meldola (See *Zur Gesch. d. Jüd. Poesie*, p. 164). The poem he refers to, while written in these three languages, does not belong to the class of Macaronics, and is the composition of Raphael Emanuel Hai Ricchi (Comp. *אדרת אליהו*, Leghorn, 1742).

⁴⁵ קאנטיגה די פורים אלה ליואנטיגה. אי אמי מי לייאמאואן חיים גיליבי, מורוס אי אנדיאנוס אפינן פור מי אל עליון. דר הביון ומחסה לאביון

⁴⁶ One begins משה עלה לשמים סין אבילה אי סין מים and the other begins יא מינדרא אל סיניור די לא רידינכיון. The first was also edited and translated by Ink (Jellineck) in *Litbl. d. Or.*, 1844, p. 670-672.

⁴⁷ Probably the same who is mentioned by Zunz (*Zur Geschichte*, p. 473) as the author of the *piyut* אש היה כתם

⁴⁸ a) משבית לכל b) אפתח שפתי ברנה. קנבארין דמאן ארינא. יראת ה' למנה c) ה. טאן קי אויין לקור גאי, נשירה אפתח שפתי ברנה, גראן דיב דאב שיל קי פרטוא c) ה. דומינא אודה שמך אל שוכן מעונה. The second poem was first published by Asher in *Litbl. d. Or.* vol. v, p. 733. It was afterwards re-edited and transliterated by Ink (Jellineck) in the same periodical, vol. vi, p. 90-92. Jellineck also pointed out that it has the name of מרדכי in acrostic. The three poems are now contained in a little volume entitled *Poésies Hebraico-Provençales du Rituel Israélite Comtadin*, traduites et transcrites par S.M. Dom Pedro II. d'Alcantara, empereur du Brésil, Avignon, 1891. The third poem has מרדכי אשתרוק יצ"ו in an acrostic. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the three poems were composed by the same man. The editor, however, failed to notice this acrostic and put forth the suggestion that the author was perhaps Mordecai Ventura (*ibid.* p. vi).

⁴⁹ Comp. *Monatsschrift*, 1899, p. 421.

the same time convey phonetically a meaning in a different language. According to Reggio,⁵⁰ Leon Modena was the first among Hebrew writers to invent this class of poems. He has reference to the octave which Modena wrote at the early age of thirteen on the death of his teacher Basula. This short poem, though written in Hebrew, can also be interpreted as if it were Italian.⁵¹ Reggio's statement, however, is doubtful, for we find that Menahem de Lonzano, an older contemporary of Modena, reproached a certain poet for composing a Hebrew poem which began with the words *מרומי על מה עם רם הומה* to the tune of a non-Jewish song which began with the words *מורירומי מי אלמא איי מורירומי*.⁵² Evidently until we ascertain the identity of this poet,⁵³ we cannot say whether Modena was the first to invent this class of macaronics or not.

In the seventeenth century Moses Hayyim Catalano wrote a poem in honor of the marriage of his sister, which likewise can be read as Hebrew or as Italian.⁵⁴ A certain Judah ha-Rophe, in the eighteenth century, composed an epithalemium which can be read as Hebrew as well as Yiddish.⁵⁵ In the eighteenth century

⁵⁰ Comp. *בחינת הקבלה*, Goritiae, 1852, p. 8.

⁵¹ The elegy begins: *קינה שמור או מה כסס אוצר בו*, Comp. Libowitz *ריא מוריא*, N. Y., 1901, p. 7.

⁵² The passage in Lonzano's *שתי ידות* (Venice, 1618, fol. 142a) reads as follows: *אבל מה שראוי למאוס הוא קצת שירים שמתחילין במלות דומות ללשון הלעז כאותו שחיבר שיר לנועם מורירומי מי אלמא איי מורירומי ואמר, מרומי על מה עם רם הומה וכו' וגראה בעיניו שעשה דבר גדול והוא לא ידע כי שיר כזה פגול הוא לא ירצה כי האומרו וזכר דברי הנואף והנואפת ולבו ורעיניו עליהם, וכן האומרים, שם נורא במקום, שיניורה וכל הדומה לזה*

⁵³ Dukes who first cited the passage quoted in the preceding note made the erroneous statement that Lonzano had reference to Israel Nagara (*Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 359). He was evidently misled by the fact that later on the same page he speaks of Nagara. Graetz (*Geschichte*, vol. ix, p. 395) and Bernfeld (*האסף* vol. iv, p. 20-21) followed him blindly, copying even the misprints, *e. g.*, *עם רם* for *עם רב*. The same is done by Rosanes in his recent work on the Jews of Turkey (*ביתורמה*) vol. iii, pp. 176, 313).

⁵⁴ Reprinted by Wolf in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, vol. iii, p. 726. It begins *און הבות אוינו* Comp. also *Monatsschrift*, 1899, p. 420.

⁵⁵ Wagenseil (*Sota*, Altdorf, 1674, p. 49) states that Judah ha-Rophe had told him of this and that he himself remembered only the first line, which is as follows: *יעקוב איש יושב אהלם אבן הראש ופינה*, Jaacob is *jo so woll im eben heraus auf eina*. Fürst (B. J. ii, p. 49) invents the title of *שיר חתונה*.

this kind of writing was cultivated by Ephraim Luzzatto,⁵⁶ but the cleverest of macaronics are the echo macaronics of Rosenzweig. In his book of epigrams there are a number of them in which a girl is represented as soliloquizing in Hebrew, and the echo responds to her sentiments in English.⁵⁷ Aside from the epigrammatic sting of these couplets, the effect of the combination of the two devices in one verse, the echo and the macaronic, is quite startling.

6-7. *Typographical and Hieroglyphic Eccentricities*

In a manuscript collection of liturgical poems coming from Tunis, and now in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America,⁵⁸ I find two poems which seem to me to be unique in character, and may be designated as typographical whimsies. Their peculiarity consists in spelling out the letters of the last word of each stanza.⁵⁹ One of the poems has the name of יצחק in acrostic, and the other that of פריי. It is, therefore, safe to assume that both are the compositions of Isaac Faragi. The same manuscript contains another poem by Faragi, the peculiarity of which is that the names of almost all the diacritical signs are woven into the poem and made an integral part of it. It is not far from possible that it was the intention of the author to substitute the diacritical sign in the place of its name and expect the reader to supply the meaning himself. It is for this reason that I designate it as a hieroglyphic whimsey.⁶⁰

8-10. *Chain Verses, Monosyllabic, and Monomial Verses*

There are also several whimsical devices which in a measure appeal both to the eye as well as to the ear. One of these is to be found in the so-called chain verses, which are so constructed

⁵⁶ a) מצבת קבורת פלוני אלמוני (in his *אלה בני הנעורים*, London, 1768, p. 42); b) שיר מזמור ליום החתונה (*ibid.* p. 54).

⁵⁷ קול עילמה וקול הר (in his *חמשה ואלף*, N. Y., 1903, p. 284).

⁵⁸ פיוטים ושירים מספרדים M.S. Hirsch, 47.

⁵⁹ Comp. below Hebrew poems Nos. 1, 2. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Zabana also made use of this device. Comp. my edition of *ספר שעשועים*, N. Y., 1914, p. 63, note 7.

⁶⁰ Comp. below Hebrew poems No. 3.

that each verse begins with the same word with which the preceding verse ended. Playful as such poems would seem, they are nevertheless found in the Liturgy.⁶¹ Another device which likewise appeals to the eye and the ear is the exclusive use of monosyllabic words. Such poems were written by Buchner⁶² and Rabener.⁶³ The monomial verses, on the other hand, are poems each verse of which consists of just one word. Poems of this class were written by N. I. Fischman,⁶⁴ L. Marcus,⁶⁵ and M. Strelisker.⁶⁶ In none of these is the art of poetry developed to any great extent, but from the point of technique they form rather an interesting group.

11-12. *Palindromes and Jesuitical Verses*

Attention may now be turned to those verse forms whose eccentric character depends not so much upon external devices, as upon some inner peculiarity, and for this reason appeal to us not through the auditory and visual senses, but rather through what may be called our logical or intellectual faculties. Such are the whimsies known by the names of palindromes and Jesuitical verses. These two eccentric verse forms are to a certain extent the complements of each other. A palindrome is a composition which can be read both forward and backward, producing the same sense. Jesuitical verses, on the other hand, are so constructed that they have one meaning when read forward and the opposite meaning when read backward. Immanuel Frances,⁶⁷

⁶¹ One is by Moses ibn Ezra, beginning *שירתי הבאתי כנחתי* (in *מזמרת שירתי הבאתי כנחתי* Berlin, 1900, p. 129; Brody & Albrecht *שירי חזיר*, N. Y., 1906, p. 81. The other is a penitential hymn by Isaac b. Yakar beginning *מלחיות לעשרה בטבת*) אירד בשיחי בשיחי לגוהי even in the Bible (comp. *אוצר הספרות* vol. ii, p. 367).

⁶² Comp. Buchner *שירי התלה*.

⁶³ a) *שיר חדש* (vol. iii, p. 146); b) *הנשר* (vol. iv, No. 12).

⁶⁴ *הנשר* (vol. v, p. 149).

⁶⁵ a) *העברי* (N. Y., 1892, No. 1); b) *נכסיה - נכסיה* beginning *ציון - נכסיה* (in *העברי* (N. Y., 1899, p. 36). The first poem was parodied by Zolotkoff. Comp. Davidson, *Parody in Jewish Literature*, N. Y., 1907, p. 254.

⁶⁶ *אלהים - בנבואה - ברמה - שמה* beginning *לראשית השנה* (in *הנשר* vol. v, p. 153).

⁶⁷ Comp. *כחך שפתיים*, Berlin, 1892, p. 24, beginning *לחך לחך*.

Naphtali Kohen,⁶⁸ and Jakuthiel of Wilna⁶⁹ have each given us a sample of a palindrome, while the Jesuitical verses have been cultivated by Judah Harizi⁷⁰ and Immanuel of Rome.⁷¹ In this connection mention may be made of a Yiddish proverb which makes use of a palindrome. The proverb reads ונתנו מאכט צוריק ונתנו. The word ונתנו (and they shall give) reads the same forward and backward. In other words, they who give have also the right to demand.⁷²

13. Mosaic Verses

A great deal of ingenuity is also shown in the Mosaic verses. I have in mind three such compositions. The one is the letter of Solomon ben Simon Duran, consisting entirely of Talmudic phrases strung together so as to make one homogeneous composition.⁷³ The other two are poems by Immanuel Frances,⁷⁴ and Moses Abudiente,⁷⁵ each word of which is found in the Bible as a proper name, but in the poem all of them retain their original etymological meaning.

14. Mnemonic Verses

Equally ingenious are the Mnemonic verses, which fall into two classes. In one class the verses are intended as an aid to memory, and consist of words which help us to remember facts and dates, and at the same time convey the meaning required of them in the poem. In the other class the numerical value of the Hebrew letters is taken into account, and each verse, when the value of its letters is summed up, amounts to a certain number, usually the year of the composition. Of the first class of Mnemonics Abraham Gabison cites two examples. One is a versification

⁶⁸ Comp. הגן vol. i, p. 100, begins: תפלה; אחלה לקוני למלא רצוני.

⁶⁹ Comp. משלוח מנות מאת יקותיאל בן יהודה ליב הרופא מוילנא המגלה הזאת, ed. by L. Scherschewsky, Vienna, 1879.

⁷⁰ Comp. החכמוני, ed. Kaminka, p. 86-87, beginning: גבירנו צירנו.

⁷¹ Comp. המליצה הישרה, chap. ii, ed. Lemberg, p. 86-87, beginning: המליצה הנזורה.

⁷² Comp. Bernstein, *Jüdische Sprichwörter*, Warsaw, 1908, p. 94.

⁷³ Comp. כרם המד, vol. ix, pp. 110-113.

⁷⁴ Comp. אשר שרי עמוס חושים, pp. 59-59, beginning: מהק שפתים.

⁷⁵ Comp. *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 784, beginning: צורי שדי וואל ישוב.

of the Talmudic tracts by Isaac ibn Zimrah, written in the meter of Judah Halevi's Zion Elegy,⁷⁶ and the other is a versification of the names of various chapters of the Talmud by Saadia ibn Danon.⁷⁷ A similar poem with a double commentary was written by Shabbethai Beer.⁷⁸ To the second class of Mnemonics belong the poems of Eichenbaum,⁷⁹ Gottlob,⁸⁰ Sommerhausen,⁸¹ A. J. Stern⁸² and Zweifel.⁸³

For the sake of completeness, we might also mention other verse-forms which are eccentric, though difficult to put under any specific classification. Such, for instance, are the poems in the ninth chapter of Harizi's *Tahkemoni*, where the poet undertakes to frame verses around some given Biblical sentence, or the Piyut of Kalir for Purim, every stanza of which begins with one of the words of the seventeenth verse in the second chapter of the Book of Esther.⁸⁴ Perhaps this might be considered as a form of acrostic.

There may be other eccentric compositions entitled to be included in this study, such as the Anagram, the Riddle, the Alliterative compositions, and the *Tegnis*. But these must be left for another occasion, as they are not, strictly speaking, eccentricities of form.

The foregoing account is in no way intended as a defense for this class of poetic composition. There cannot be the least doubt that these eccentricities tend to make these compositions clumsy and cumbersome, and very rarely add to the intrinsic value of the poem. But the student of literature has to take account of every literary phenomenon that presents itself.

⁷⁶ Comp. עומר השבחה Leghorn, 1748, fol. 123c.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 123d.

⁷⁸ Comp. ספר בארעשק Venice, 1674, fol. 1-6. It begins ברכות אלוי להרים לחימי שביעית להרים [Communication of Mr. Israel Schapiro.]

⁷⁹ Comp. his קול זמרה Leipzig, 1836, p. 49-53.

⁸⁰ שיר לפק"י (in Wohlman's הכוכבים 1865, p. 30).

⁸¹ דעת דרות (in Filipowski's ספר האסיה Leipzig, 1849, pp. 110-113).

⁸² Comp. Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, p. 382.

⁸³ מנחת תורה (in כרם חמר vol. ix, p. 80-81).

⁸⁴ עבודת ישראל (יאהב אומן יתומת הגן p. 674).

Hebrew Appendix

illustrating the typographical and hieroglyphic eccentricities.⁸⁵

1

יִצְרֵר מִידוֹ עוֹשֶׁר וְרִישׁ
 אִשִּׁיר לְכַבְדּוֹ שִׁי"ן יו"ד רִי"ש
 צִוֵּר מַעֲזוֹ דָּלִים בִּאֲמַת שְׁמוֹ
 רוֹכֵב גִּלְגָּלִים מִי יִקְדָּמוֹ
 מִלֵּאכִים סִלִּים רָצִים אֶל נֶאֱמָו
 כָּל אֶל זֹלָתוֹ שִׁי"ן קו"ף רִי"ש
 וְלֹא יֵשׁ בִּלְתָּו אֶל"ף חִי"ת רִי"ש
 ח'סִין בְּכָל הוּא וְאֶהֱלֵלוּ
 כִּי אֵין כְּמוֹהוּ וּכְפַעֲלוּ
 הַיָּמִים רֵהוּ כִּי בִשְׁעָלוּ
 מִדֵּר מִימִיהֶם צִד"י וי"ו רִי"ש
 וְשֹׁאוֹן גִּלְיָהֶם שִׁי"ן בִּי"ת רִי"ש
 קוֹם וַעֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא הָעֶלֶם מִשְׁבִּי
 מִבֵּית הַכֶּלֶא אֶל אֶרֶץ צִבִּי
 שֶׁם יִרְעָה טֹלָה חֹאב עִם לִבִּיא
 עַח יִדָּךְ הִרְאָה מ"ם ה"א רִי"ש
 וּבִאוֹרֶךְ נִרְאָה אֶל"ף וי"ו רִי"ש 86

2

פֶּלֶאֹ וְגִדְלוֹ מ"ם ה"א מ"ם
 זַעֲזוּ וְחָלוּ מ"ם יו"ד מ"ם
 רְיֹחַשׁ לִשְׁוֹנִי וְשַׁפְתִּי בִשְׁוִיר
 אֶל צוֹר נֶאֱוִנִי שׁוֹכֵן הַדְּבִיר
 נַעֲלָם מַעֲיִנִי כָל הַיִּצִּיר
 כִּי הוּא לְבָדּוֹ טִי"ת רִי"ש מ"ם
 הָרִים יוֹלְדוּ קו"ף דִּל"ת מ"ם
 נִבּוֹר מִפְּזֹר כֹּאפֵר כְּפֹר
 וְנִבּוֹרָה אֲזוֹר כֹּאזֹר נְבוֹר
 חֲמִים וְנִזּוֹר אֵין לוֹ הַפּוֹר
 סֶךְ בְּדִלְתֵיהֶם ה"א יו"ד מ"ם
 בְּנִיחוֹ יֵצֵא מ"ם רִי"ש חִי"ת מ"ם
 יִהְיוּ בִסְדּוֹ שְׂרָפִי מַעֲלֹת
 כֶּסֶּאֹ וְהוֹדוֹ חִיּוֹת סוֹבְלוֹת
 מִקּוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ לִהְלֵל שׁוֹאֲלוֹת
 נַעֲלָה בְּמִרְמוֹ וי"ו רִי"ש מ"ם
 יֵצֵר בְּצִלְמוֹ אֶל"ף דִּלְ"ת מ"ם
 ח'ו'קִז מַחֲוִים אֵת תּוֹקֶף שְׁמִי
 זֶרַע עֲנוּיִם שׁוֹמְרֵי נֶאֱוִמִי
 קוֹו מִקּוּיִם כִּי עֵתָה יָמִי
 יִשַׁע אֲנִלָּה לִמְ"ד כ"ף מ"ם
 כִּי אֵת גּוֹרְלִי אֶל"ף תִּי"ו מ"ם 87

⁸⁵ See above Nos. 6 and 7.

⁸⁶ MS. Hirsch, 47, fol. 92a, No. 32.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* *ibid.* No. 33.

3

צור פלאיך מכל חי נשגבו
 הן כשחק מאזנים לך נחשבו
 אל מדבר בצדקה צאנך פרוק
 לאסוף ולקבץ חיש להם שרוק
 זרקא אל פנימו אבן ורוק
 איך שמוע שופר הולך יתאבו
 עם בפזר גדול חלו נכאבו
 נון לירח בן יומנו וריש
 יענה תלשא אף לה קול יחריש
 פסקא רביע כאזלא גריש
 מעפרים עם מעצבה שכבו
 שעשויעה יום יום לך יערבו
 חיש בזקף גדול כירב דללו
 גם שני גרושין מהר נחלו
 מתביר זה עוד אל דרגא יעלו
 מאריך טרחא עד כי רב דאבו
 בו יגיעי כח נוח יישבו
 מנשוא עול דגש יונה יוחלה
 בו כתרצה יפה תהיה מושלה
 חשטפהו שבולת מי מחלה
 אור משיחי יבנה ערים חרבו
 את וכל בניך שירים ינובבו 88

פלאך קויתי רגלי רוממה
 ירך על גוים רמה עצמה
 ריב להושיע מה יקר חסרך
 בלחך אין לנאול הרם ירך
 דון באמה כי על חנם ננרך
 בעדם הקיפם מקף נאמה
 עוד היות לסגולתא נאה נעמה
 ג'ואלי חי בשר כי אז נהיה
 הוא לקרני פרה סורה נעיא
 קן ישובב יונה תמה רעיה
 לה מהופך שופר כונן קוממה
 יתמכו גם תורה לכל קדמה
 יה בזקף קטון עד אן עמך
 משכו שלשלת כבלי זעמך
 עם תרין טעמין טוב טעמו טעמך
 ירך שא ולצר נקם שלמה
 חיש ביום אתנח את לבם נוחמה
 ח'זיקי לב רפה מר לי יעטוף
 צר יתיב במ הוות עני יחטוף
 חיש כראש שבולת ימל גם שטוף
 הנני מפיך לך אחות רוחמה
 לך ידבר על לב לקרוא נחמה

⁸⁸ MS. Hirsch. Part II, fol. 81, No. 31.



A 000 133 947 2

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

REC'D LD-URL

MAR 25 1989

Univer
Sout
Lib